

[Mildred Lawson]

Contininty

February 1, 1939

Mrs. Sue S. White

Beauty School

10 1/2 E. Clayton St.

Athens, Georgia

Hornsby

Mildred Lawson

The last step had been reached of the long flight of steps. I paused in [?] the empty hall to get my breath before entering Mrs. Lawson's Beauty School. A placard placard was tacked on the door advertising the price of her work.

I opened the door and entered the lounge longue. It is nicely furnished and pictures of different styles of hair dress lined the wall, which is common in these establishments. The lounge lounge is petitioned partitioned off with a screen, and is used as a class room. There is a long table filled with books, chairs around the table and a large blackboard on the wall. Mrs. Lawson is the instructor.

As I entered the lounge lounge, I saw Mrs. Lawson sitting before a large mirror in the practice room. "Hello!" she said, Come in and have a chair by the window." She was wearing a white skirt, pink sweater, tan oxfords and [?] hoes hose to match. She is of

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medium size and about five feet tall, she has [blueeyes[?]]., One of her students was buisy busy engaged in applying dye to her hair of some reddish. This is a very large room and all the apparatus] that goes with a beauty parlor is conveniently placed in the room. ? ?

“So you want to know about the ways of a beauty parlor? Well I have been in the game fifteen years. The reason I went into the beauty parlor was because at that time I did it was a profitable business. I was just a stenographer in a small town, in a fertilizer and peanut shelling plant in [?] South Georgia [?] I had a son to put through school and I wanted him to have a good education, I 2 selected Athens to live in so it would be cheaper to educate him and now he wants to be a doctor. I am looking toward my beauty school business to see him through.

“Don't let anybody fool you it is hard work, and we have lots of fun too. I want you head these paragraphs like this. “What I always wanted to say about my customers and never did.” “WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED TO SAY ABOUT MY CUSTOMERS AND NEVER DID.”

“There was a woman who came to my place every day. She was a large and all out of shape. She gave me the impression that her husband stepped out on her for the more attractive people. She was about forty-five or fifty, everytime she came to me for a manicure, facial , and her hair fixed she would say: ‘Please make me look pretty so my husband will think I look nice and won't run around. “ I did my best, but there are some people you can't help no matter how much pains you take with them.

“People come to the beauty parlor to gossip about their neighbors, and sometimes they talk about us. We often go to them and say to 'em “ we can hear waht what you say about us. “ It is hard to please people in my line of work. There is a woman in town who is a business woman. She was the world's worse worst when I was at the Georgian Hotel at that time, we had an awful time with hot water. From three until five o'clock in the afternoon the water would get too cold for our use. One day she came in for a shampoo. I told her the water was too cold, she said; ‘ I want a shampoo ‘ and began to get ready for it. Again

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I told her the water was cold , anyway she sat down I told one of the operators to give her the shampoo, when the cold water was turned on her head she jumped 3 up and blessed us all out. I told the girl to dry her hair, she said: 'I can't go out of here looking like this.' " I told her, ' You don't look any worse than you did when you came in. ' She had the worst looking mop of red hair you ever saw.

"One day last year a northern woman came to my shop for a permanent permanent wave. She was a norty? Laugity? type of person , . Her nose was turned up as if everything smelled bad. She was large, had on and was clad in a white dress that had large pink flowers on it. Her legs are twice the size of mine, her hose were and she wore gun metal hose to hide the size of them which made her look that much worse. I did her work myself, she began to ask personal questions. [?] 'do you have many customers!' she asked, I told her 'more than we can manage some days." Oh, she replied 'How can you do so much at your age ? ' "At my age I ask asked ? Why , I am only forty-one." 'Forty-one! is that all.' That remark made me fighting mad, however she didn't know it. I meant to get even with her before she left my shop. I worked on, she never stopped talking. After she had talked about everything else, she asked me ; , ' How do you like the new materials this year?' "Oh, I think it is they are beautiful, but I simply can't stand large prints on large women, and I always did hate gun metal hose. I knew it was katty catty but I couldn't resist the temptation. I give her the wave but I must admit I would ? have given her a better job if she had been nicer.

"We had a woman to come in last week who is more or less a crank, she wanted her hair fixed a certain way. Well we did it. Then she wanted it changed and done another way. We changed it 4 for her. After we did that she decided she would have a shampoo, and the operator in trying to please her accidentally accidenally got some of the rinse water in her eye , . She jumped up, cursed the operator out, refused to pay for the work , and left. Her niece wanted an appointment and told one of the girls she was ashamed to come because her aunt had made it very embarrassing for her. We told the girl that didn't made

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any difference as we were use d to all kind of people. The girl came and we gave her the wave.

“Do you know the best way to lose a customer is to credit them . ? because After all beauty work [?] is a luxury. The only thing I ever lost on the university girls, was just before the Christmas holidays of this year when a soroity sorority girl came to my shop for a permanant permanent wave. After I had finished with her she told me to charge it and she would pay me when she came back after Christmas. She went home and I have never seen or heard of her since.

“I have a friend who is a widow, she is seperated separated from her husband , . She has a nice car and gets a nice sum from alimony. I can tell when she is ready to have work done, for a time before she springs it on me she can't be too nice. I know what she is up to as it has happened too often. Then she comes to have her work done. She thinks I do it for nothing, but I don't. ? I charge it each time she comes and some of these days I am going to present her with a bill. She tells her friends I do the work for her free. She is instrumental however, in sending lots of her friends to me. “I like men better than I do women, therefore when I started ‘to work [?]’ I justed hated to touch a [?]

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“I like men better than I do women, therefore when I started to work oh, I just hated to touch a woman's hair the odor of their oily hair made me sick often I have taken down a knot of hair, maybe hadn't been washed in three months, in those days they didn't have short hair, and when I smelled that ransid rancid odor of oil I have had to stop my [?]? work and run to the rest room to burp. If people knew what we saw when we start with their hair they would be more generous with soap and water. Not so long ago a mother brought her little girl to me for a permanent wave. I turned her over to one of the girls. After she had finished and they had gone the operator told me that child's neck, and back of her ears also the edge of her hair was so filthy she took a scrub brush to get the child clean. I mean

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a brush we have for scrubbing the scalp in a severe case of dandruff. That child was from a nice family.

"I had a shop like this in South Carolina, it was during probation. You notice I don't have booth's in my shop. The reason for that is, I was born in the country and; I like ' plenty of room and wide open [?] spaces.' To get back to my story , a college girl came in one day for a wave. She was talking down, to the operator, giving her the wave. I was doing a hair dying. The sheriff in that town was a handsome man and single, so Mrs. Brown and I were talking about him. The girl over heard us and said, ' oh, if you [?] think he is goodlooking you ought to see my bootlegger,' "I said, [?] ' Yes he is goodlooking isn't he , Mrs. Brown . [?] ' telling the girl Mrs Brown was his wife. I said this so the girl wouldn't would ? 6 say nothing more about Mr. Brown. She was the smart type and thought it was cute to let us know she drank as girls had just started that and smoking. However, I must say Mr. Brown was a nice man and from a lovely family. After he came back from the war he couldn't find a job, and that was the only way he had of making a living.

"In my time at least since I have been running a beauty parlor of my own. I have bought about three bushels of end curlers and now I have about three dozen. One trait some of my customers have, is, they go to the dime store and buy a come comb which looks very much like the ones used in beauty parlors. They will come here to have work done. When our back is turned they swap combs with us. I pay \$1.25 each for my combs there is no reduction on the quality bought and to find someone has swaped combs with me makes me down right mad. I reckon I had better not tell you any more dirt, but what I have said is all right, but there are things that happen here among the customers I had better not tell.

"Business men tell me since I have been in business that women are their best bet when it comes to paying their accounts. On the other had the National Cash Register men say a woman cashier knocks down more money than men. They find it out through checking the cash registers.

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"I find that business women and girls also soroity > sorority girls are my best customers. They have to be , and want to look well groomed, and the sorority girls try to see which one can look the cutest. You take the women who stay at home they have more time to do these things for themselves.

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"Would you believe it if I tell you that married women with responsibilities make the beat operators . ? " The girls who were listening to Mrs. Lawson telling her story spoke up, ">>why, you know girls look fresher. Take our mothers , for instence instance, they have to work so hard at home I don't see why they would. " " Nevertheless it is true." their teacher told them, " she continued: "Don't you think for a moment this kind of work isn't hard, it is much harder than office work, this is [?] physical labor. I know for I have done both and know. A woman who works in the courthouse told me one day she thought girls would make better beauty operators, because they had more patience. I told her she was mistaken because this type of work is harder. You only have one boss to please in a office and in this work you have to please everyone who comes to you. You not only have to sell them on your personality and work, but sell them on the idea of having things done they have never had done before to make them look better. You take a woman with a colorless face. If you can sell her on the idea of having her eyebrows and lashes dyed it makes the eyes look larger and the face will seem to have more color and expression.

"We are trying to make a real profession out of beauty operating. We are trying to introduce a bill into the legislature, so that each operator going out into the professional world after they have completed their [?] course will have to pay a license to the state of \$100.00[, ?] before they can begin work. This is to protect those who have made a study of beauty culture, and to keep those out who are not professionals. The operators use to learn the work or thought they know it and started to work. It is not that 8 way now. They have to have a blood test made and have a physical examination before they can enter

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school and the health certificate has to be renewed each as long as they remain in the service. This is required by the State Board of Health.

"I have been doing this kind of work for fifteen years. I have ran run a beauty parlor exclusively until a short time ago. I decided to teach beauty culture and opened up a school in connection with my parlor. The State Board of Barbers and Hair Dressers went won't allow both going on the same building so I gave up the parlor. However they do allow us to have customers and we charge a nominal sum, not the regular price as my students are not considered experts until they have completed their course which takes six months or one thousand hours. Those are the requirements of the State Board before they care take an examination.

"I never select my [?] girls because they have nice hair or nails , . However, a pretty face and figure goes a long ? ways in a beauty parlor , . say See here an operator who is ? popular in her work don't always have time to keep her hair nails and face jam up. And you can't judge a good operator by her personal appearance you have to try them first. It is in this work like everything else every sometimes the ones I consider best gets the least to do.

"When I started to work, I worked in my sisters sister's beauty parlor in a small Georgia town. She learned the work in New York and Chicago. The only beauty clinic in Atlanta at that time was Hern's, * I believe that was the only one. It doesn't take talent to be an operator. *(Probably Herndon's - or possibly Hearn's)

"I have girls in training from all over Georgia. They board 9 out in town, when my lease expires I am going to get a large house and have a dormitory on the top floor and a training school on the training school on the first floor. Then I am going to open up another beauty parlor in some convenient location of the city. When I started to work, I was paid a commission, I have made as low as \$5.00 a week and as high as \$65.00 lots of weeks. Most of the beauty parlors pay their operators on a commission [?] only. I pay my girls

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salaries, because it [?] keeps down confusion. If I had a popular operator and everyone who came in wanted that particular person, than I would let the ones not quite so popular help that one. I worked along with my girls and drew my salary the same as they did this kept down jealousy and confusion. Salaries and commissions have their advantage and dis-advantages. A girl on a commission makes a better operator than those on a salary. An operator on a commission works harder, she finishes her work quicker and does a better job, she will also call her friends and ask them to come to her, and tell her to ask others. Where chose The operators on a salary takes her work as a matter of fact, knowing she will get her money as long as she pleases the customers and manager of the establishment.

“There is a greater profit made in shampoos and manicures, than in any other type of work, such as permaments and >finger waves, facials , >and massges massages . The reason there is less expense attached to the material used.

“The youngest customer I ever had was fourteen months old, a doctors doctor's child. Her mother brought her up here, and held the child in her arms while I gave her the permanant permanent wave. I have old women come to my shop to have work done so old they use a cane for support to walk. Women that age are harder to please than younger people.

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“When I started to work in a beauty parlor gun gum -chewing was not allowed, you were fired as quick for that as for any [?] other offence. Now since girls smoke I think they are breath-conscious, and chew gun gum to kill bad breath. Most all of our customers chew gum and smoke from nervousness while under the dryer. And most all of them read during the entire time. Those who don't read like to gossip with the who attend to the machine does her work . However, I have always discouraged this sort of thing, for this reason. There are always things said that shouldn't be passed on and should that operator repeat the conversation there would be trouble, because if a customer comes in and like her work

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she will tell her friends, you know how women like to talk so this , indulgence indulgence isn't allowed between customer and operator.

"I remember one incident incident the my shop in South Carolina. A very prominent woman and her husband seperated separated . It was really a very tragic seperation separation . Every woman who came in had a different story to tell. One of my operators repeated what she had heard and it caused an awful fuss. Of course I had to fire the girl. I had another girl who was bubbling over with mischief. She would come in and [?] no matter how many was in my shop . , she'd exclaim 'Oh, did you know there is to be a grand parade, with floats and people all dressed up . ! ' After a while when everyone was busy, several horns would sound from cars on the street she would stop what she was doing and run to the window; saying 'Oh, here that , the parade is coming.' Every one would run to the window. One day she had a water pistol, filling it with water , she went to the window and shot the water on a policeman. Was he mad ? He came up here and blessed 11 her out. It frightened her to death. I had to let her go, because that sort of thing won't go when you work with the public.

"I give all type of waves manicures, facials, dying dyeing the hair, eyebrows, lashes, hotoil hot/oil treatments and shampoos. I have never had any trouble in baking the hair too much. I have automatic out-off's on all my machines. There is no guess work about permenant permanent waving.

"I went into business for myself in 1929. I have been in business in Athens six 6 years. I came here to go in business because I am a Georgia , woman and I wanted my son to go to a Georgia College and it cost me less to send him to send [?] him here. The town I left in South Carolina was a mill town and there wasn't much business at that place. Now [?] I have given up my shop for the present, and I'm teaching girls to become beauty operators.

"My girls pay me \$60 .00 for six the 6 months course, or one thousand hours. When I get your more students my price will be \$90 .00, the average price for a complete course

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is \$135 .00. Each beauty parlor school fixes their own price. The girls work from nine 9 o'clock in the morning until six 6 o'clock in the afternoon, they have an hour for lunch, and an hour of each day is devoted to study. I have five 5 electric heaters, four 4 gas heaters one 1 and electric blower for drying hair after a permanant permanent wave. The money taken in by the students from customers goes to me. I require my girls to wear white uniforms, I think the operators appear much nicer. Now that I have the training school I don't do any of the work. When I open my shop again I will work like the other operators.

"My students pay for their tutition tuition in various ways. One girl 12 bathing he burned all the clothes he was wearing even to his uniform, he said his clothes were ragged and not worth saving. He was shot in his hip and all the fingers on one hand were shot completely off. He reared two sets of children, my mother was one of the younger set. He had several children when he went to war, and when he came back several more were born to them. General Clement A. Evans was my grandmother's brother on my mother's side.

"I believe in religion and am a member of the Baptist church, but am ashame ashamed to say I don't go like I should. I had religion cram[?]ed crammed down my throat until I married. My mother and father were very strict and I was reared on the front seat in church so to speak. I do want my boy to ba a good christian man, and I feel its my duty to talk to him and tell him the right from wrong, by pointing out my mistakes to him. I have denied myself every pleasure and the better things in life that he might have a good education and make a man of himself. After all it is a pleasure for me to help him I am getting old now and his future is ahead of him.

"My husband and I are not living together. I met him in the room I was born and reared in. My father owned a large farm, they say people in South Georgia are land poor , that [?] was us. Anyway father decided to sell [?] that part of the land and built another house. A friend of the family bought [?] the land our first house was on. One night one of the girls gave an old fashioned square dance and invited me. I went, she had the dance in the

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room that was our bed room and there is where I met my husband. I never worked a day before I married I never had to. After I married I had to go to work to help out.

“When I was in South Carolina, I had my shop done in green and tan, I had bought a very expensive line of cosmetics [???] 14 in blue bottles. The cabinet I had built for my goods the [?] color didn't make those blue bottles stand out so I had the back of the cabinet painted black. One day an art teacher came in, while I was doing her work she began to criticize the color scheme of my shop and the black background of my cabinet. I told her I liked it, she said: ‘that is because you don't have any taste.’ When she called for an appointment I wasn't busy that day, but I told her I had all I could possibly do for that day. I have those things said to me that hurt than , I have things to balance them up.

“Once I made a long distance call to Gainesville, Georgia, a few days later that long - distance operator came in for a shampoo and finger wave. She told me the reason she came to me was, when she was putting that call through to Gainesville for me, she liked my voice and decided to come to my place for her work. That reminds me of the time when I worked in a telephone office. Fertilizer and the peanut shelling season didn't last but a few months, when I weren't working at the plant I was a ‘hello girl.’ In that town they had a radio station in a drug store. I doubt whether it was ever heard out side of the town or not. Anyway, one day a girl called the drug store , for asked them to play Gene Austin's St. Infirmary Blues. The orperator operator connected her with the laundry The girls at the laundry said ‘we don't have any blues for Mr. Austin.’ ‘What do you mean ? ‘ asked the girls' girl ‘We don't have Mr. Austin's laundry listed.’ Than the girl discovered she had the wrong number and did we get blessed out.

“When I moved my shop to this end of town everything was on the decline, there were several vacant store buildings, soon after 15 that business [?] began to pick up. Now there isn't a vacant building, in this block. A business man told me [?] in this block [?] to get together and pay [?] rent [??]

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"My one ambition in life is to be a writer if I had gone through school as I should I would have taken journalism in college and had I accomplished my aim I would like to pay Erskin Caldwell back for the mud he has slung on the South. I have written several stories and some day I am going to get someone to edit them for me and have them printed.

"Well I believe I have told you about all that would do to put into print, and too I have been so busy since you came, I am wondering if you will ever get it straight," One of the operators students had just finished combing a customers hair , [?] had given a finger wave. When she came to the shop, she fussed because one side of her head had more curl than the other, her hair was cut shorter in some places than in others.["] Mrs. Lawson, said: "But Miss Black we fixed fixed it exactly as you told us to." This made the customer ferious furious "Well", she said, "I don't like it and I want it done over." The work was completed, Mrs. Lawson asked her: "How do you like it now?" "[?] it is much better now. How much is it?" Mrs. Lawson told her; "35cent"; Miss Black turned red in the face: "But surely you don't charge a customer when they are not pleased with your work, do you?" "No, when it is our fault, but we fixed your hair just as you directed it, and we charge 35cent; for a finger wave and drying it." "Well," said Miss Black, "here is the money, and I don't intend to come back I was sure you wanted your customers to be pleased." "I am awfully sorry Miss Black, but it isn't 16 our fault." At this she snatched on her coat took her hat in hand went out of the school, slamming the door after her. Mrs. Lawaion Lawson [????] turned to me and said: "I have been in business fifteen years and when those things come up, they still hurt." I told her I must be going. "Do come back," she [?] invited me; "and I hope you don't find my story too un-interesting." She followed me to the door leading down the long flight of steps. "When I told her good bye the tears were still in her eyes, she was putting up a hard flight to keep them back.

[?Paragraph ?]

[?Paragraph ?]

[?Paragraph ?]

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I think it is permissible to chew a fresh piece of gum for a moment or two to kill bad breath. Most of our customers chew gum or smoke to relieve the tedium while under the dryer; The majority of them read as they smoke and chew. I prefer the readers for the others are apt to gossip with the operators. I've always discouraged that sort of thing, for no matter how innocent the intention the conversation always progresses until things are said that should not be passed on, and should an operator repeat some of these personal conversations there is apt to be serious trouble. The only kind of talk I encourage about my shop is for the customers to tell her friends how she likes our work and send them to us to prove it. But gossip! No.

"Illustrative of the danger of common gossip, just let me tell you of an occurrence that took place when I was operating a shop in another state. A very prominent woman and her husband had separated. It was really a tragic separation, and every woman who entered my shop had a different tale to tell about it. One of my operators repeated something that had been told her by a customer about this case, and it caused an awful fuss. Of course, I had to fire the girl.

"Deliver me from these mischievous girls. I mean the ones that are proud of their ability along that line. It was in that same shop that I had the misfortune to engage a girl that proved to be just bubbling over with so-called innocent mischief. No matter how many customers were in my shop she would exclaim, 'Oh, did you know it's nearly time for the grand parade? There'll be people all dressed up marching, riding horseback and on floats,' and any other excit-

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"I give all types of waves, manicures, facials, hot oil treatments, and shampoos, and I also dye hair, eyebrows, and lashes. No I have never had any trouble about baking the hair too

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much, for all my machines are equipped with automatic shut-offs. There's no guess work about permanent waving in my shop.

"I went in business for myself in 1923, and 6 years ago I opened my own shop in Athens. I came here because as a Georgia woman I wanted my son to complete his education at the University of Georgia. To come here, I left a mill town in another state. There wasn't sufficient business there for me to clear enough money to sent my boy to college. Now, I've given up my shop for the present, to teach girls to become beauticians.

"My students pay me \$60 for a 6 months course, or a thousand hours. When I have enrolled four more students I intend to raise my price to \$90 for the 6 months course. My price for 6 months, or a thousand hour course includes only the subjects essential for eligibility to stand the State examination, but I also teach other and more advanced subjects in beauty culture, and my price for the complete course is \$135. A graduate who has mastered the complete course has prospects of better earnings than the one who studied only the primary essentials. My students are in training from 9 o'clock in the morning until 6 in the afternoon, and they have an hour off at noon. One hour of the school day is devoted to study. Each student is given regular practical experience in all the subjects in her course. To give you an idea of the amount of equipment I provide for their use, just to mention heaters alone, 15 I have 5 electric heaters, 4 gas heaters and 1 electric blower for drying the hair. I require all my students to wear white uniforms. I think the uniforms give the girls a much nicer appearance. Now that I operate a training school I no longer do any of the actual work myself.

"My students pay for their tuition in various ways. One girl from the country wanted to take the course but told me she didn't have the money, so I agreed to accept chickens, hams, potatoes, and fresh vegetables. That helped her and me too. One man paid his daughters tuition with lumber, which was used to remodel my apartment.

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"I was born on a farm in the southern part of the State, and when I was about our years old my parents moved to town. Four years later father's health failed and the doctors advised him to move back to the country. Father was a teacher and he built the first schoolhouse in that community and taught in it. He and several other men organized the Baptist church and built its house of worship. He was a deacon in that church as long as he lived. One thing sure, just as soon as I am able I'm going back and buy that little old pedal organ that I used to play Sundayschool songs on in that old church when I was a girl. Although I quit school when I was only 13 years old, I've always liked to read and study, and my people were by no means illiterate.

"Both of my grandparents fought in the War Between the States. Mother's father was badly wounded. When he came home from the war one of his slaves saw him coming and ran to meet him. Grandfather told the Negro not to let grandmother know he had arrived until he